

Hot Weather Has Me Switching Gears

by Steve Welch

Once the water temps hit eighty we are in full summer patterns. Hot weather doesn't mean the fish won't bite, actually some fish become very predictable on feeding times and locations.

During the three warm summer months I combine fishing trips between early morning crappie and about mid morning we switch over to white bass.

Here is my reason why. White bass will roam our large flats early in the morning making them harder to find but once the boat traffic gets out they move back out to the deep ledges and remain there the rest of the day in huge schools.

The crappie will feed at daylight on the shear ledges using brush to hide in. With the new limits this year we can keep an additional five fish under ten-inches so this makes it feasible to go crappie fishing for about the first four hours of my guide trips. This normally would give us eight to ten fish over ten and all of our shorts and that alone would be a good bag of fillets. About mid morning we decide to stay on the crappie or switch to the white bass. I am open to either but I always remind my clients on how tough it will get once the sun gets up high.

For the crappie we use long ten-foot poles and jigs in my summer or clear watercolors. This means either pearl white with silver specks or emerald blue shiner tubes. We vertical fish over the brush in at least fourteen feet of water closer to twenty.

If the clients then want to switch the white bass fishing has got to be the best, hottest action you can get into. Once they get out on the deep channel ledges and school up in thousands of fish you can get one on every cast. We buy about twenty dozen minnows and tie them onto a drop-shot rig and then I put the boat over a big school of fish and the rest is history. I can't even use my live wells we catch so many fish. I bring along a cooler and we just throw them on ice.

I fish for the white bass with two different methods. Usually I give the clients a spinning out fit spooled with ten pound test. I tie on a half-ounce weight on the bottom and then go up the line and tie on a live bait hook on a short on-inch loop knot. We use medium shiner minnows and we get a ton of them. I have had trips that we have had the cooler full in the first two hours of the day. The cooler holds about one hundred and fifty fish, now that is catching them.

My second method is to use a bait casting reel and stout medium to heavy casting rod, spooled with twenty-pound big game line. I tie on a seven-eighths ounce Bomber Slab spoon in either white or chrome. Above it I tie on a small treble hook dressed with white deer hair or tensile.

We fish this rig vertically over the drops and jig it up off the bottom then follow it back on a slack line. We catch the bigger white bass doing this, but that is not my real reason for rigging this pole. We catch big and I mean big buffalo, catfish, and I even caught a musky on it last year. The buffalo really hit this and I can get you a fish over twenty pounds in less than ten minutes and do this over and over all summer long. My biggest last year was forty-two pounds.

We had many guide trips last year that we caught over a hundred white bass, twenty crappie, and nearly that many big buffalo over fifteen pounds and some over thirty pounds and believe me that is a typical outing not some rare occasion. All my buddies call me the Buffy King as I have had three hundred pound stringers of them in a day and I have been booking trips on just the buffalo ever since the word got out on just how consistent I catch them and how much fun they are.

If you hook one of these hard fighters anywhere but the mouth they will charge out of thirty foot of water and jump two feet in the air before you can count to two. Now that is a hard fish to keep up with. It reminds me of striper fishing and I think that is why I love it so much. They soak you at the boat and all my clients just love to catch them.

I know this fishing is kind of different but I thought I would just share this with you. Maybe you can come out and see that hot weather doesn't mean all fish won't bite and the kids just love this. Just check out the pictures on my web-site of all the kids holding these big buffalo.